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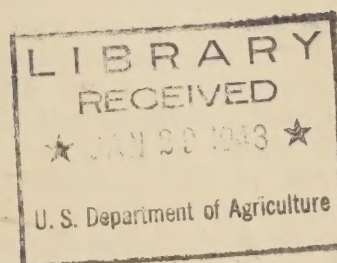
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FARM LABOR NOTES

April 20, 1942

Drawn from reports of field representatives*



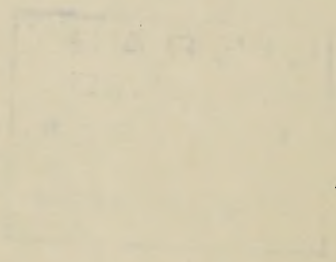
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

US Bureau of Agricultural Economics

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FLORIDA:

It is estimated that there is 20 percent less seasonal labor available in Florida this year than last. However, due to inclement weather, heavy rains and winds, causing crop damage in the central and southern parts of the state, this decreased labor force has been able to take care of the seasonal labor demand. As of March 25 the Employment Service reported a surplus of 2,800 laborers, consisting chiefly of truck crop laborers in Palm Beach County. At the same time there was need for cane workers in the Glades, Indian River and Clewiston areas and for tomato pickers in Collier County. The normal migration for this time of the year has continued north from Dade County although this migration is about 20 percent short of normal years. It is reported that this is due to South Georgia farmers, who usually go to Florida during the winter months, remaining at home because of increased farm activities and the increase in peanut acreage.

It is believed that a falling off in the movement of migratory workers up the Coast will be observed inasmuch as the Florida farm operators are trying to hold on to as much labor as possible by increasing their operations and staggering planting dates in order to have work for this additional labor during a longer period of the year.

Around April 25th the new crop of beans will come into bearing in the Everglades causing some increase in the demand for labor. The month of May will find vegetable harvest in full swing in all sections of the state except the Lower East Coast. Some shortage of harvest labor may be experienced since the delay in Spring crops will result in most sections harvesting beans, cucumbers, peppers and tomatoes at the same time. The important Hastings potato crop will demand a fairly heavy concentration of labor during the last week in April, lasting about three weeks. Transient labor is now on the move back to North Florida and Georgia to get in a crop of peanuts and tobacco for the summer months. Some of the general farming areas have had difficulty in securing experienced help.

GEORGIA:

The State Director of Federal Employment Service, Mr. E. A. Adams, has stated that the labor situation over much of Georgia is acute and that F.E.S. rolls are exhausted in many counties. Some counties have expressed themselves as desiring to have WPA projects suspended throughout the State for the duration of the labor emergency.

Difference of opinion exists as to the facts of the labor situation.

SOUTH CAROLINA:

Many farmers claim to be short of hands. There is considerable controversy about the labor situation. At a meeting of the Richland County War Board, the WPA came in for criticism. In a number of counties, - e.g. Dillon, Lee, Richland and York, WPA projects have been closed.

NORTH CAROLINA:

In spite of alleged shortage of farm labor, progress of farm work at this time is considerably ahead of the usual season. This is due to (1) weather favorable to early spring work, (2) greater use of tractors and farm machinery, and (3) use of a reserve labor supply on farms, which under other conditions would not be available for field work.

VIRGINIA:

Farm work has progressed very satisfactorily although it is asserted that there has been a shortage of farm labor. Only a limited number of farms, mostly small ones, have had to curtail operations or quit farming altogether due to lack of help. The situation is becoming acute in areas near centers of large employment such as Richmond.

Spinach is being harvested in the Norfolk section where most operators are able to get only a quarter or half as many workers as formerly. However, this is not always as big a handicap as it appears, since in other years laborers would often work for only a day or two at a time and sometimes only part of the day. The strawberry harvest in the Norfolk section, the lower Eastern Shore and in Accomac County, between May 10 and 30, will present the most difficult labor situation in the truck crop section for the year. Other important truck crop operations in the near future are the setting of tomato plants on the lower Eastern Shore about April 20 to June 10, harvesting of snap beans at the end of May and potato digging in June.

Five migratory labor camps are expected to be established; two in Accomac County and three in the Norfolk section. Nobody seems to know what migratory labor will be available but it is generally expected it will be less than usual. Recent information indicates that local opposition to construction of FSA camps in Accomac County has led to suspension of work by the FSA pending further investigation of local sentiment toward the project. Construction had previously been recommended by the County Board of Agriculture.

WEST VIRGINIA:

The earlier view that the farm labor problem in West Virginia would probably be solved by increased family labor appears to be borne out by more recent reports. Early accounts of serious farm labor shortages in West Virginia are discounted. There is no doubt a shortage of laborers available at last year's wages. Pooling of labor and equipment is spreading over the State and will be a great contribution toward the solution of the farm labor problem. The Farm Placement Service is now fairly well organized at most of the key points.

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MARYLAND:

The supply of labor is uniformly lower than a year ago. On the Eastern Shore the shortage of labor is not as serious as in the rest of Maryland. The general trend of farmers' comments is that farmers are aware that on their part harder work than in the past will be necessary at harvest time, and that exchange of labor will be necessary.

The State's Attorney in Queen Anne's County recently has undertaken to prosecute idle men on vagrancy charges. More than 100 idlers are reported to have taken farm jobs recently, as a result of this action.

DELAWARE:

The farm labor situation in Delaware is becoming more acute each day. In New Castle County, as of December 1, 1941, 21 percent of the farms report losing labor to industry and 70 percent losing labor through Selective Service. Figures for the other counties are comparable. If some provision cannot be made for the orderly securing and using of a considerable number of migrant laborers, production is bound to be curtailed.

From data obtained from a farm labor survey conducted in cooperation with the Extension Service and the AAA, the State RAE representative had been able to place in the hands of each county Farm Placement representative a list of farmers who had requested help in securing labor, and the number and class of laborers each required.

Governor Walter W. Bacon stated at a conference on March 12th that he felt that some discrimination had been shown against Delaware in the matter of allocating F.S.A. mobile labor camps and proposed that steps be taken to secure reconsideration of camp allocations so that Delaware could have at least one camp.

NEW JERSEY:

The strawberry harvest which usually starts about May 5th will certainly not be ahead of time this season. Farm labor in New Jersey has been drawn away by the higher wages paid by many war industries. At the present time it appears that there has been little or no curtailment of farm operations because of insufficient labor. The dairymen are the most seriously affected. The on-farm labor supply is still not being exploited to the full.

The need for migratory workers will in all probability become acute by the middle of June when bean picking, fruit harvest and other intensive crop operations are in full swing. Definite steps have been taken by the F.S.A. to erect two camps in South Jersey. Reliable sources indicate that farm support is strong for these camps.

Four county boards of agriculture and a number of canning companies have pooled funds to hire two labor scouts to work in cooperation with the New Jersey Farm Placement Service and other state services to secure orderly recruiting and routing of workers from points of origin to points of employment in

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New Jersey. One of these scouts will cover Virginia, West Virginia and North Carolina, the other, Florida. The North Carolina Employment Service has agreed to recruit labor in the western part of the state for use in New Jersey.

With regard to the placing of Farm Placement offices in the State, the problem is not so much one of a sufficient number of offices but rather of having a few offices well placed. Present plans include having permanent offices in 21 different locations in the State where farmers can place orders and workers can enroll for farm work. The State Farm Placement Representative is attempting to work toward a plan whereby permanent offices will be located throughout the agricultural areas and temporary offices will be established at all of the market auctions several days a week, at the grading stations for the various canning organizations in the State and at other locations such as Berlin in Camden County, so that farmers will not be expected to travel long distances or to go into highly congested areas in order to have the use of the Farm Placement Service.

One of the greatest concerns is the clearance system of the Farm Placement Service which entails considerable delay from the time a farmer places his order until he can expect his order to be filled. The Farm Placement Representative and the state workers are attempting to provide clearance from a local office, such as Bridgeton, to southern areas. We think this is practical because, needless to say, there is no surplus of workers in New Jersey and whether it is right or wrong, youth and women's land army groups will only be used as emergency measures. Most youth in New Jersey are citified and would not provide a very desirable type of labor. We have taken many steps forward to organize youth and on a smaller scale a women's land army. However, as stated previously we plan on these sources of labor as a last resort.

NEW ENGLAND:

Farm labor shortages in New England are forcing adjustments in farming operations which, before the 1942 season is over, may result in a decrease in 1942 production in comparison with that of 1941. Many small farms will discontinue operations almost entirely.

RHODE ISLAND:

The Employment Service will supply registration cards to school principals who will register pupils wishing farm employment. These cards will then be returned to the Employment Service. County agents will refer farmers needing labor to local USES offices.

The Employment Service is unable to find labor in Newport County and has placed clearance orders with its Boston office.

NEW YORK:

Comments from reporters continue to emphasize that finding farm help is a serious problem, and that a reduction in output may be necessary for this reason.

CONNECTICUT:

It is reported that two mobile F.S.A. camp sites will be established in Connecticut, in accordance with a formal request of the State Agricultural Defense Labor Committee. (FSA)

It is proposed by this Committee that a committee be appointed to work out details of an educational and publicity campaign for regular farm labor in cooperation with N.Y.A., U.S.E.S., and the University of Connecticut. It is also proposed that a resident center for the training of skilled farm labor be established at the University of Connecticut, in cooperation with N.Y.A. and U.S.E.S.

MAINE:

Some consideration has been given to an organization of a Junior Volunteer Program in Maine which would provide for the recruiting and supervision of some thousand urban boys who would work as farm laborers during the summer. It seems unlikely that this proposal will receive the approval of the officials involved unless it appears that the U.S.E.S. program will be inadequate. It is the opinion of some who were directly connected with the Junior Volunteer Program sponsored by this State during World War I that the labor problem can better be solved by other means.

There is some interest in this state in developing a women's farm labor force similar to that organized during the previous war. The persons most interested in this idea are convinced that such a labor force would supply many of the full-time laborers needed on the larger farms. They are interested in developing this program in a small way in order that the procedure for enrolling and training women laborers can be perfected and available if it is necessary to turn to this source for a large number of farm laborers.

MASSACHUSETTS:

In pressing situations now. Tomato canning counties are now looking into labor prospects. The general opinion is that no one can tell until they put on their campaigns for local help. Many caution against attempting to line up their labor before the jobs are available, fearing that some people will not respond to a second appeal, if not put promptly to work when first enrolled. State BAE representative is keeping in close touch with canning companies.

(a) Any guess based on not too much authentic information, it would seem that there is prospect of a real farm labor shortage within the next two months in the following counties: Ashtabula, Lake, Trumbull, Geauga, Portage, Mahoning, Stark, Summit, Cuyahoga, the northern part of Columbiana, the edge of Medina along the Summit County line, the northeastern corner of Wayne, the northern and eastern parts of Lorain, the northern part of Huron as well as Erie, Franklin, Butler, Montgomery, and Hamilton.

(b) This prospective shortage is likely to be that of year-round help, chiefly in dairy farming, the usual source of which has been local. Within the next two months also there is likely to be some shortage of seasonal labor in the above mentioned counties which have considerable acreages of truck or specialty crops. This seasonal labor is migrant and local although the immediate shortage will likely be of local labor.

(c) To be perfectly frank there is very little if anything being done to meet this prospective labor shortage. The Employment Service is, of course, intensifying their efforts along the farm labor placement line. How effective the Employment Service will be is highly questionable, due to about three facts as I see them. First, most of the Employment Service personnel doing farm labor work is thoroughly unfamiliar with agricultural work, its qualifications, duties, etc. Second, the farmers have little or no confidence in the Employment Service. In many cases this lack of confidence is fully justified. Third, it is awfully hard for the Employment Service or anybody else to recruit farm labor to work for \$50 or \$40 per week and board when almost any able-bodied man or young boy just out of high school can secure \$50 to \$40 per week working in war industry.

ILLINOIS:

The most serious labor shortage at the present time is in the Chicago and the East St. Louis areas. In the former, the counties of Cook, Will, Kane, DeKalb, Lake, and McHenry are affected, in the latter, the counties of St. Clair, Madison, and Clinton. There is not thought to be a general shortage of labor in these two areas. The situation is tight for a number of farmers and wages are high, especially in the Chicago area. It is too early to know just what will happen in regard to market gardening. A number of dairy farms are now short-handed, these two areas constituting milk-sheds. In the St. Louis area, the worst situation is in the St. Clair and Madison counties, probably only the western part of Clinton county is affected. Other areas of minor importance at the present time are the Rock Island-Moline industrial area, Rock Island and parts of Mercer, Henry, and Whiteside Counties; the Peoria industrial area, Peoria, Woodford, Tazewell Counties, areas affected by ordinance plants; Lee County and parts of Fulton, Mason, and Sangamon Counties.

The great need will be for seasonal labor; however, in the Chicago milk-shed area many year around hands are needed. Greatest shortages are being reported for single men. A number of Illinois Counties report an abundance of married men for farm work. One of the difficulties in using married men is a lack of housing facilities on farms. It may be necessary to encourage

farmers having housing facilities to purchase or rent trailers in which to house their hired help. An instance came to my attention a few days ago where the farm worker, himself, owned the trailer, and in this case the employer made an adjustment in the monthly wage because the worker is supplying his own living quarters. In general, the dairy areas have the greatest need for year around labor. In most other sections of the state, while the labor situation is tight, the need is primarily for the seasonal worker.

The farm adviser's office has always been a kind of a clearing-house for farm labor. In recent months this activity has undergone an increase, and a Farm Labor Placement Service is now being organized in Illinois. However, the local offices of the United States Employment Service have functioned in a major capacity in placing farm laborers. Most Illinois counties have established farm labor committees, and in many instances these committees are the County USDA War Boards. In some cases the War Board has designated a group of farmers to act in this capacity. About a month ago, "Request for Labor" cards were distributed to farmers in most counties of the state. These cards are to be returned to the farm adviser who in turn transmits them to the employment service office. These cards will be sent to farmers at least three times a year, that is, prior to spring work, the haying and small grain season and the fall harvest season. This will give an opportunity to know where laborers are needed, the kind and the number. For some time an effort has been under way to inventory available high school youth for farm work. This has been done almost entirely through the vocational agricultural teachers. It must be emphasized that weather conditions will have a tremendous effect upon the amount of farm labor needed.

CONCLUSION:

There does not seem to be any prospect of a severe shortage of farm labor within the next month or two. There is, of course, a general tightening of the labor situation; this will become more and more stringent as the season progresses and as the conversion is made from peace-time manufacturing to war production.

Contrary to many reports and forecasts there is some indication that there will be adequate Mexican labor for sugar beet work. The latest information on this indicates there are several hundred more Mexicans in Michigan than a year ago at the same time and the report is that many more are ready to leave Texas as soon as the season opens. It should be noted, however, that this comes from the sugar beet company representatives who are anxious that there be no curtailment of acreage due to fear of labor shortage.

The State Farm Labor Subcommittee, the USDA War Board, and Office of Michigan Defense are working closely with the U. S. Employment Service. The present plans call for a farm placement man in some fifty-five agricultural counties in Michigan with itinerant service in other counties. Apparently there is some delay in procurement of funds to put on sixteen additional farm placement men to augment the present force of forty.

at present the most active and, in my opinion, the most practical movement in farm labor is the appeal to high school boys to volunteer for the summer. This movement has received the active support of the 4-H Club organization and the Future Farmers Clubs. This movement is just getting under way but promises to be quite successful.

WISCONSIN:

The dairy industry near industrial centers is short-handed but no new or unusual situations in prospect. The Farm Placement Service is being slowly organized, but seems unable to meet the farm labor committee request that their budget be used to put full time farm placement people in selected localities for four to six summer months instead of one-third or one-half the all year around. State War Representative is trying to iron this out.

MINNESOTA:

Mr. L. E. Ryan, State Director of the Employment Service, has stated to Mr. Ray Brown that there is no serious farm labor shortage in this State at this time and that in his opinion there is not apt to be any serious shortage early 1942. In general, this opinion seems to be shared by practically all persons who are best qualified to judge the extent of the farm labor problem. Of course, one hears a good many reports of individual farmers who are unable to get a help. However, closer investigation of these cases frequently shows that these individuals are unable to obtain just the quality of help they want or at wages approximating those which they have been paying in the past. When judged by these standards, there is undoubtedly a shortage of farm labor in the state. However, we have no reason to believe that there will be any decrease in agricultural production in this State because of labor shortage.

The Employment Service is expanding its system of local Farm Placement offices throughout the agricultural regions of the State. Also, the Employment Service is organizing residents of many of the towns and villages so that they can be ready to assist local farmers during peak seasons, if the need arises. Vocational agriculture teachers are conducting special training classes for high school boys to fit them for farm jobs. Many of the implement dealers are conducting special courses in the care and operation of tractors and other farm machines. As a part of a survey to determine progress toward the achievement of 1942 production goals made by the local A.A.A. committees under the direction of the State War Board, practically every farmer in the State has been asked to indicate the number of persons he expects to employ and the approximate time he will need them during the coming season. This information will be made available to the Employment Service as rapidly as it can be tabulated. It will indicate to the Employment Service the extent, the

time, and the location of expected labor shortages and will provide an accurate basis for effective programs.

In summary, we believe, that effective steps are being taken by such farm labor problems as are apt to develop in this state. At this time we can see no reason for concern about this problem in Minnesota.

MINN:

Apparently no especially pressing situations. There has been considerable fixing up of old tenant houses, etc. this spring to take advantage of the opportunities for getting middle-aged families back on to farms, let out of garage and auto-sales agencies in nearby towns.

One hundred and six reporters indicated that labor was not scarce; 78 reported scarcity of labor. Forty expressed the opinion that help would be scarce in haying and harvesting. A number of comments indicated that considerable exchanging of labor between farmers was in prospect.

NORTH DAKOTA:

The North Dakota plan for meeting the farm labor problem presents two aspects which are worthy of note. First, the leading role which is being played by the rather complicated organization set up as a result of the conference called by the Governor, and second, the limitation of the scope of the plan to activities having to do with the recruitment and direction of seasonal labor.

In the first point, in North Dakota the Governor's Executive Committee, its various subcommittees, and the county organizations tied in with it, are assuming the functions assigned by memoranda issued from the office of the Secretary of Agriculture to U.S.D.A. War Boards and Farm Labor Committees. Assistance from farm labor subcommittees, War Boards, and other groups, is contemplated on special assignments.

According to the North Dakota plan for meeting the farm labor situation, the County U.S.D.A. War Board will register labor requirements. A card will be mailed to every farmer asking him how many additional men he will need for haying, threshing and for how long a period. The returns will be summarized by the County U.S.D.A. War Board and the information made available to the local representative of the U.S. Employment Service. This survey will be made about June 15, 1942.

The County Defense Council will recruit individuals from cities and towns to form a local pool of workers for farmers to draw on when other sources are exhausted. Many individuals in business or employed in town may be willing to work a few days to help the farmer with his harvest. Farmers will be kept currently informed of the farm labor situation through the press and radio and encouraged to use the Employment Service.

At the present time registration of workers is limited to city residents. On the farms there are no significant numbers of unemployed farm workers and will not be spoken for by farmers without further registration. Qualified persons employed on the WPA and the NIA are already registered. School youth available for farm work will be registered before the school term closes. Those women in town who are available for work will be registered by the County Defense Council. No plans have been made to register women on farms.

Comments generally indicate that work this spring will be performed even though labor may be shorter than normal. There will be more help exchanged, more custom work and longer days will be the rule.

SOUTH DAKOTA:

Shortage of labor is anticipated in the sugar beet areas. The South Dakota Employment Office reports an order for about 800 beet workers in the Black Hills area. The Employment Service expects to recruit a large proportion of the needed beet workers from Pine Ridge and Rosebud Indian reservations from which satisfactory workers were secured last year.

There is a possibility that continued delay in spring planting of the wheat areas of North and South Dakota, due to cold weather, may somewhat later intensify the demand for labor, under circumstances of a reduced supply of experienced farm hands.

It is the opinion of the agricultural statisticians that despite complaints about high wage rates and the lack of supply that the labor shortage will not reduce farm operations to any material extent. However, it may affect the choice of crops produced, causing farmers to raise grain crops at the expense of sorghum, feed crops and hay. Should this happen to any great extent and should a drought be encountered the situation would be serious. To be caught short on feed at a time when the livestock population is at high levels would be a disaster.

NEBRASKA:

Various labor shortages are evident. However, reports of shortages of skilled dairy hands have come from the dairy areas. A few commercial dairies are reported to have reduced their herds in consequence.

Anticipating a labor shortage throughout the crop season farmers have in many instances placed hired men on the payroll earlier than usual in order to have them available when the spring work opens up. In spite of the adverse weather during the last week of March which practically prohibited all field work, the number of hired workers per farm was the largest for April 1 since 1935 with the exception of 1935 and 1940. There is more demand for regular hands than for day labor.

COLORADO:

Due to the lateness of the season the actual pinch of labor shortage anticipated by the farmers has not been felt thus far. It appears that Colorado farmers will be able to get their crops planted. With modern machinery the farm operator himself can plant a lot of acreage. In some cases a labor shortage is a shortage of convenience rather than a shortage actually delaying farm work.

The Employment Service reports farm labor 25 percent short in this State. This, of course, includes anticipated shortage at peak periods. It probably does not take into account the extent to which farm women will be used in farm work, the increased use of farm youth, or the extent to which peak labor needs can be handled through exchange of labor between farmers, etc. It is likely that an estimate of a 25 percent shortage exaggerates the situation. Probably 60 percent of the farm work is done by family labor and 40 percent by hired labor. A 25 percent shortage would mean an approximate shortage of 25,000 persons, if we assume approximately 100,000 farm laborers including family labor. In other words, this would mean that 25,000 of our 40,000 hired laborers had disappeared or had been absorbed in other labor channels. A more reasonable estimate is that our shortage of hired labor might amount to from 4,000 to 5,000 people.

The State Farm Labor Subcommittee submitted to the State USDA War Board on March 24 a report on the activities of county farm labor subcommittees. The committees are engaged in a wide variety of activities. Surveys are being made in 32 counties to determine the magnitude of seasonal labor requirements, the size of the available labor supply, and the need for outside labor. Development of recommended base wage scales, adjustment of school debts, exchange of labor between farms, registration and training of school youth, improvement of housing, and other work is under way in various counties.

UTAH:

Utah and Western South Dakota report a need for additional workers for lambing. Effort is being made to recruit some experienced lambers from New Mexico.

Farm labor is becoming increasingly scarce. Farmers and ranchers are bidding against each other for men. Wages have risen very rapidly and are at present comparable to the high of World War I. The transient labor which usually supplies the bulk of necessary farm hands has dwindled to almost nothing.

MONTANA:

Montana has a shortage of Spanish-American migrant sugar beet workers is anticipated. The growers in the Hardin, Sidney, Chinook and Missoula

Districts have recently requested that 4500 Japanese Aliens suitable for sugar beet work be made available in these districts this year. Organized training for sugar beet work for high school students in the city of Nevada is now being offered.

A meeting was called on March 26 by Governor Ford, which was attended by sugar beet growers, General DeWitt, and a representative of the Department of Agriculture to consider problems posed by the evacuation of Japanese from the Pacific Coast. Continuing responsibility for making recommendations concerning these problems has been assigned to the State Farm Labor Subcommittee.

MISSOURI:

The general feeling is that the supply of regular monthly hands is adequate. There appears to be very little day labor available.

In Group Reporting District I plans are under way to establish a program of cooperative use of power machinery and equipment.

In District II registration of farmers available for part time work has been completed.

In District IV, including Kansas City, some dairies have closed because of inability to secure regular labor.

In Lawrence County shortage of labor is anticipated for the strawberry, tomato and bean crops. Plans are under way to make fuller use of boys and girls of high school age.

The State Department of Education is collecting information from high schools as to the number of students interested in summer work. Local Civilian Defense Councils will be requested to assist the Employment Service in registering these youth.

The State Farm Labor Subcommittee has decided that county subcommittees should not attempt to determine fair wage scales.

The Agricultural Extension Service has issued a directory of the membership of County Rural Program Planning Committees and Farm Labor Committees.

County War Boards have been instructed to cooperate with local Selective Service boards. A recent release from State Selective Service Headquarters is expected to result in a smaller number of occupational deferments in agriculture, and to clarify the basis of such deferments.

NEBRASKA:

Recent surveys indicate that the labor situation may be serious in 1942 but will not become critical until 1943. The only serious shortage at present is that of skilled dairy hands. A few counties are organized into community

to handle labor problems. The Labor Subcommittee is well equipped to meet labor needs and the situation can be kept in hand if the machinery operates as well as expected.

ARKANSAS:

Throughout most of the state the next peak in farm labor requirements will be around the middle of May or the first of June.

With the exception of seasonal labor required in the fruit and vegetable areas, most of the demands for labor appears to be for resident tenants and croppers to do regular farm work.

Most of the counties reporting a farm labor shortage in March (only 17 of 44 counties reporting) are in the Southern and particularly the Southwestern portion of the state.

Seasonal labor has had a much larger part in the harvest of previous strawberry crops than it will this year. Many schools will be dismissed in time for school children to help harvest strawberries. Cotton chopping will begin about the last week in May.

ARIZONA:

There were fewer actual complaints with respect to farm labor on April 1st than in March 1st. Farmers are beginning to make adjustments to meet the situation.

ARIZONA:

A State Farm Labor Committee and farm labor committees in all counties have been organized.

The Employment Service has not yet secured Farm Placement men for all of the 44 offices. Development of the Farm Placement program has been hampered by the absence of the State Farm Placement Supervisor, who has been detailed to work in Georgia for sixty days.

Farm labor surveys are being made in all communities in the State.

MISSISSIPPI:

A serious shortage of tractor drivers and other semi-skilled farm laborers is apparently beginning to be felt although reporters indicate that there is an adequate supply of common labor.

LOUISIANA:

Extra help is hard to get most operators are managing to get the Spring work started. Fear is expressed that it will be more difficult to secure sufficient help when the peak is reached for hoeing, churning and harvesting of cotton.

The most pressing need for labor in Louisiana is in the strawberry area. A newspaper report from Hammond on April 4 states "there is an acute labor shortage, many pickers having gone to war or into war industries." Agricultural agents report that some farmers have abandoned growing strawberries altogether due to labor shortages.

The Employment Service has indicated on several occasions recently that they have found no instances in the state where there was an actual physical shortage of labor. That service is convinced that ample labor is available for harvesting strawberries this month and is not expecting any acute labor shortage situation to arise in any other section of the state in the near future. The labor supply situation this fall, of course, will depend upon the condition of the rice, cotton and sugarcane crops.

OKLAHOMA:

Only one county, Ottawa, reported an inadequate supply of labor for the month of March. Comanche County reported that a shortage was anticipated during the hay laying season and would last through cotton picking time. Murray County reports the need for a few farm hands who can be employed on a monthly basis. Okfuskee County reported minor shortages of plow hands. Eleven counties reported surpluses of farm labor of varying size.

TEXAS:

An already short farm labor supply in Texas is being further reduced by the recruiting of laborers to work in the best fields of the Northern States. A report prepared for the Farm Labor Subcommittee by Commissioner John D. Cook of the Texas Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that this out-of-state movement will be on a greater scale during 1942 than in previous years. These workers will be drawn directly from the pool of migrants ordinarily utilized by Texas farmers in the major agricultural areas of the state. The amount of this migration it is too early to predict. Last year approximately 10,000 "registered" workers left. It is estimated that 30,000 additional workers left voluntarily without being solicited by labor agents. If the exodus of the present year should be double that of last year, this would mean that almost 50,000 laborers will be absent from the State during the peak of the planting season. Physical examinations are required before workers are accepted which limits the work to the youngest, most able-bodied and efficient men. Free transportation by train from Texas to destination, with food allowances while enroute, is being offered. Workers who travel by automobile are covered with insurance by at least one labor agent. In many instances, physical examinations are being given on the spot without the worker having to go to San Antonio or some other central point. Return transportation at the end of

the season is guaranteed. Year-round work is being promised in some cases.

The office of the State Labor Commissioner reports that the Migrant Agency law is being strictly enforced. Three licensed agents are now operating in the State. The fact that beet growers are willing to comply with the expensive provisions of this law is evidence of their need for labor.

The biggest trouble now is indifference. Many farmers who will need their workers late in 1942 are making no effort to encourage them to stay at home. One of the laborers already signed up for a job in the beet fields sums up his attitude in these words: "Nobody has promised me a job in Texas. People have asked for before haven't even talked to me about working this year. I'm going where I know I'll have a job."

Cotton harvest which will reach significant volume during the middle of April will provide the next peak of labor requirements followed by tomato harvest in the Lower Valley the latter part of the month.

At the request of the Texas Farm Labor Subcommittee a special survey was made by SAE of the labor situation in the Corpus Christi area (Nueces and San Patricio Counties). The report, presented at Austin, Texas, on April 14, 1942, lists the causes of the 1941 farm labor shortage, — such as lack of necessary system in bringing labor into the area, ineffective recruiting and placement, lack of the part of the Farm Placement Service and of private contractors, persistence of wage rates too low to retain labor, excessive shifting of labor, ineffective procedure at FSA camps, etc. Recommendations called for (1) Extension Service activity on the part of the Extension Service; (2) Adoption of a more consistently selective policy by WPA; (3) Modifications of FSA camp policies and (4) of Employment Service procedure.

The Texas Farm Labor Subcommittee has prepared radio programs outlining essential factors about the services which the USES, FSA, WPA, and others have to offer the farmer in the solution of his labor problem.

The United States Employment Service has been requested to designate a representative to participate in the SAE project for determination of 1943 Production Goals.

The State Farm Labor Subcommittee is obtaining information concerning possible adjustments in school dates from the State Superintendent of Public Education, which will be made available to county farm labor subcommittees.

THE FUTURE:

At present remains essentially an area of considerable labor surplus, a large portion of which has never been efficiently utilized. Few attempts have been

to draw this rich resource of man power into the productive channels of the area. The Great Western Sugar Company, operating chiefly in the Idaho and Arkansas Valleys and the Holly Sugar Company, operating chiefly in Nevada and Utah, are trying to recruit additional Spanish-American labor from the New Mexico counties of surplus population. It is too early to evaluate the success of their recruiting efforts.

An increased number of Spanish-Americans are now being employed by the railroads after a lull of many years. If the demand for such workers continues to increase, the higher wages, plus the transportation provisions offered by the railroads, may prove a potent source of competition for the companies seeking beet workers.

There has been and there still exists in central and southern New Mexico, and in some areas of greater labor demand, a reluctance to employ labor from northern New Mexico, which is the area of supply. The southern users of labor have already asked that immigration restrictions be modified to facilitate the importation of Mexican labor. Yet there are still large relatively unemployed labor resources in Taos, Mora, San Miguel, Guadalupe and Santa Fe Counties, New Mexico, and in Navajo County, Arizona.

The shortage of labor is most pronounced in agricultural areas around defense industries in the construction stage. Young men who are able to drive tractors and trucks leave the agricultural areas.

Many of the migrants to the Pacific Coast have returned because of inadequate housing, the high cost of living and the prospects for defense work at home.

Recent observation indicates that defense work has drawn a much larger proportion of unmarried youth than of men with families.

The War Relocation Authority is cooperating with the United States Employment Service in the State-wide registration of all farm operators and workers. This work in the counties will be conducted through Community Victory Councilmen.

Summary:

Compared with a month ago there has been increased need of hired workers for the harvesting of the lettuce crop in the Salt River Valley and for the preparation of seed beds for cotton. Need of hired help for other types of farming operations has changed very little. However, it is anticipated that the job in this State is going to be a big one this year and we are probably going to require from 3,000 to 5,000 more workers than in years past -- at least, the work to be done would normally require that many additional workers. Our work up to this time indicates a slight reduction in the number of workers available within the State and a possible loss of people who normally migrate to the State for the peak period of labor requirements. This begins in September and continues well through February. At that time our vegetable crops,

citrus crops, and cotton harvest all require a peak number of workers.

The large Indian population of Arizona represents a reservoir of labor which was formerly important but which has not been used during the past ten years. During the 20's this Indian population was drawn upon for seasonal labor. During the 30's the dust bowl refugees forced the wages so low that the Indians, who had a level of subsistence guaranteed them, withdrew from the labor market and have been largely ignored by employers during the past ten years. These people have in the past proven themselves to be efficient enough to play an important part in the development of Arizona agriculture and may be considered an important element again as soon as wages rise sufficiently to entice them from their reservations.

The U. S. Employment Service is developing a register of unemployed farm workers and members of farm families unemployed and available for work. Cooperation in this activity is being supplied by the Resettlement Division of the Farm Security Administration.

Registration of farm laborers, operators, and members of farm families only partially employed has not been undertaken formally.

The Agricultural Experiment Station is providing information relating to custom operators. The Work Projects Administration, NYA, and CCC, are maintaining a running register of persons on their rolls available for farm labor. Registration of school youth who may be available for farm labor is being undertaken by superintendents of schools throughout the State.

No registration of women has been undertaken and no plans have been developed for making use of regularly employed townspeople during seasonal operations. Local community and county labor committees are developing programs for exchange of work in local communities. Training schools have been held for the repair of farm machinery, vocational agriculture schools are giving farm machinery repair courses, and the Work Projects Administration is providing training for dairy workers and for operators of tractors. No other training appears to be particularly necessary within the state.

A complete housing survey has been undertaken by the Farm Security Administration to indicate the number, location, and condition of housing available for farm workers. Plans for transportation of workers to and from work have not been developed, but are upon the agenda of farm labor committees. In addition to this work committees are also investigating the following:

1. Means of achieving greater farm labor efficiency through altered base wage rates, changes in methods of payment, and better distribution of housing.
2. Investigation of potential labor supplies among persons who are not normally employed in agriculture or other industry.
3. The U. S. Employment Service has been advised concerning the need for additional farm placement workers, and the locations where such workers should be employed.

4. The Farm Security Administration has been advised relative to establishment of additional migratory labor camps.
5. The U. S. Employment Service is establishing lines of communication with other states, wherein other areas may be kept advised as to the labor requirements for Arizona and availability of labor within Arizona.

UTAH:

Present plans will greatly change the balance between agriculture and industry in Utah. Towns like Ogden will probably be doubled or trebled in size. Counties immediately affected are Weber, Davis, Salt Lake and Utah.

Such development will undoubtedly draw off a large portion of the surplus agricultural population in Utah and will probably start a reversal of the present trend toward smaller farms.

NEVADA:

Thus far there has been little farm activity. Spring plowing and early planting is now going on and the need for additional farm workers will probably soon be felt. However, there is not much intensive agriculture in Nevada and with the organization of farm work that is being effected, farm operations can probably be carried on as usual. Much can be accomplished by exchange of labor.

WASHINGTON:

The supply of farm labor is considerably below that of a year ago and the demand is somewhat greater. Were it not for the late spring the demand would be considerably higher, as all groups of farmers, because of improved net returns last year, are in a much better position to hire labor this year. Another factor contributing to the low demand this April is the high level of farm wages which causes many farmers to extend the period of their operations so as to do as much of the labor as possible, themselves. Dormant spraying together with spring seedings and asparagus cutting and packing, will cause the largest demand for labor in April. On April 1 the greatest demand was for experienced milkers, orchard help and tractor drivers.

Although the labor supply will be limited, growers do not expect any serious shortages until harvest of strawberries in late May. Skilled dairy and orchard help will continue to be scarce, also sheep herders. Reporters comment that not enough skilled farm help is being deferred despite Gen. Harshey's recent instructions.

OREGON:

In early April field work is not in full swing and the need for farm labor is limited. However, on dairy, fruit and truck crop farms, including hops and other specialty crops, there are prospects of a shortage. This is particularly true of experienced dairy workers.

In this state the Farm Placement service is exceptionally well organized and works in effective cooperation with the FSA camp system. Plans have been made, and are being carried out, to utilize to the full the services of every available worker.

In Oregon the U. S. Employment Service and the Board for Mobilization of Women have jointly made a survey of women in the State with the intention of determining the available labor supply from that source.

The Oregon State College, the RAE and the U.S. Employment Service are at the present time cooperating in collecting field data relative to farm labor requirements per acre by season of operations.

The Oregon USDA War Board is sponsoring a detailed survey in each of the Oregon counties as to the location of harvesting machinery, its capacity, and intended use by the owner. An attempt will be made to make full use of otherwise unused equipment capacity. The Oregon State College is cooperating in this survey.

CALIFORNIA:

Growers in California have recently taken steps to secure the importation of agricultural laborers from Mexico. Leading in this effort are the representatives of the sugar beet processors and growers. Reports, prepared by the RAE, too lengthy to be summarized here, set forth certain aspects of the California farm labor situation:

1. Migration to the Pacific Coast has continued at a high level although farmers and farm laborers may not constitute as large a proportion of these migrants as formerly.
2. Employment in manufacturing and processing continues to expand.
3. The USFS indicated a surplus of 6500 unemployed agricultural workers on March 28. Unemployment is heavy among Mexicans already in California.
4. Growers of sugar beets, asparagus, lettuce, etc. insist on confining their offers of employment to Mexican, Filipino, and Hindu seasonal workers. They prefer labor that can be handled in gangs, housed in camps, and dealt with through intermediaries. They refuse to make any effort to secure "white" labor.

5. Relatively low wage rates are being offered in agriculture as compared with those offered common labor in industry.

The BAF reports state that in 1941 the customary surplus of farm labor in California was reduced and for the first time in years it was necessary for growers to make some effort to secure labor. However, no crops were lost as a result. In 1942 the labor supply will be further reduced, perhaps by 10 percent. At the same time, expanded production goals may call for 10 percent more labor than was required in 1941. This gap of 20 percent, it is suggested, can be made up in at least three ways:

1. By securing 20 percent more man days of labor from the available labor supply, through more efficient utilization.
2. By recruiting women, children, the temporarily unemployed, etc., through community action.
3. By importing workers from outside the area.

As yet little has been done along the first line or the second. Until these avenues have been more thoroughly explored, it is contended that resort to importation of Mexican laborers should be avoided. However, if the latter be decided upon, it is suggested that importation should be permitted only under governmental regulation and with adequate safeguards.

Measures being taken at the present time in California are as follows:

1. The State Farm Labor Committee is sponsoring the registration of all school children over 16 years of age who are willing to work in agriculture. This is a joint project of the California Department of Education, the U.S. Employment Service, and the State Farm Labor Committee. A similar registration is being carried out in Oregon.
2. Plans also have been made for a state-wide registration of persons other than school children in California who would be willing to assist in the harvesting of crops. This is a joint product of the State Farm Labor Committee and the U. S. Employment Service, and is being given the technical assistance of the California Agricultural Experiment Station.
3. The Experiment Stations in all States of the region are considering the publication of a bulletin containing numerous examples of ways in which farmers may conserve labor. In California this project is nearly completed.
4. Various state-wide organizations of farmers are participating also in plans for meeting farm labor shortages. The Farm Bureau, the Grange, The Farmers' Union, and the Associated Farmers in California have agreed to assist the State Farm Labor Committee in all phases of its work. This arrangement is particularly helpful in bringing a larger number of farmers into the scope of the farm labor program.

PROPOSED FSA CAMPS (FSA., April 17)

Atlantic Coast: 19 mobile units - 41 sites, with 150 housing
units at each site

Connecticut	-	2 sites
New Jersey	-	3 "
New York	-	5 "
Maryland	-	4 "
Delaware	-	1 "
North Carolina	-	5 "
Virginia	-	7 "
Florida	-	14 "

Michigan: 1 light construction camp

30 labor homes to be added: Saginaw Valley Farms project
1 mobile camp unit

Colorado: 1 permanent standard camp

Texas: 3 light construction camps

Oregon: 1 light construction camp

California: 1 mobile camp unit

